

Systematic Evaluation of Environmental and Economic Results

EPA Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center

Description of activity: The Systematic Evaluation of Environmental and Economic Results (SEEER) is a joint project of the EPA's Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center and the U.S. Department of Interior's (DOI's) Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution (CADR). SEEER's goal is to quantify the results of using environmental conflict resolution (ECR). The SEEER project is the first known systematic effort to compare the environmental and economic results of ECR to its alternatives. The findings of SEEER may assist public decision makers and other stakeholders in determining how to address important environmental and natural resource issues and whether ECR may be appropriate in a given situation.

Thus far, the SEEER evaluation methodology has produced information on the results of ECR compared to the alternative, including the following:

- Environmental Effects – an index of environmental effects tailored to each case and aggregated into categories to facilitate analysis across cases based on judgments of the importance, probability, magnitude of the environmental and natural resource effects from several different sources.
- Economic Valuation of Environmental Effects – the values of environmental effects are calculated where relevant and credible economic valuation studies exist.
- Effects on the Community – an analysis of how a decision addressed the relationship between conservation and use of natural resources and the effects that the decision had on regulating use.
- Effectiveness of the Decision – a comparison of results related to the efficiency of the decision making process, such as:
 - Information Sharing – the extent to which information is shared at different points before, during, and after the ECR process.
 - Social Capital – existence of relationships among parties that may productively transfer to situations other than the case being evaluated, as well as benefits to the ECR process and effects on morale and public image.
 - Financial Statement Results - Changes in the assets, liabilities, costs and revenues of parties.
 - Time to Reach and Implement a Decision – estimated savings in terms of time and money.

Preliminary results from applying SEEER to a limited set of cases suggest possible savings, potential environmental benefits, increased organizational effectiveness and more durable agreements from using ECR compared to the alternative. EPA has found the SEEER methodology to be feasible and relevant to our evaluation of ECR outcomes. Together with our partners at DOI, we are continuing to refine the approach and plan to expand its application to additional cases in the near future.